

NICK CARTER WEEKLY

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NICK CARTER'S BEAUTIFUL DECOY OR THE DIAMOND DUKE OF CHICAGO



BY
THE AUTHOR OF
NICK CARTER

NICK WAS GETTING THE BEST OF THE STRUGGLE WHEN A NOISE FROM BEHIND ATTRACTED HIS ATTENTION.

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Nick Carter's Beautiful Decoy; OR, THE DIAMOND DUKE OF CHICAGO.

By the Author of "NICK CARTER."

CHAPTER I.

SOWING THE WIND.

"Look quick, Chick! See that man?"

"Where, Nick?"

"Just going into the Fifth Avenue Hotel."

"Well, by Jove!"

"Know him?"

"Do I know him? Why shouldn't I know him as well as you? It's Yank Yardell, the Diamond Duke of Chicago."

"You're right, my boy. That was the Diamond Duke, a little older and considerably changed in appearance since we met him last, but Yank, just the same, and not disguised one particle."

"Wonder where he's been ever since that time, Nick, and what is he doing in New York walking the streets in broad daylight?"

"I'm going to find out," was the reply.

"You had better walk on, while I go in after him and investigate. I am sufficiently disguised to take chances in his presence, but he might get onto you, for the Diamond Duke is a keen one."

"All right, Nick. I'll meet you at the house; for I'm dead anxious to hear your report."

The two men parted in front of the hotel entrance—the last spokesman proceeding onward up Broadway, and the other, who was the celebrated New York detective, Nick Carter, entering the famous Fifth Avenue Hotel in quest of the Diamond Duke.

As Chick walked briskly along New York's great thoroughfare, he recalled to mind some stirring incidents through which he and Nick had passed in Chicago about three years previous to that time.

They had gone to the Garden City, at

the request of Chicago's chief of police, to run down a well-organized band of diamond thieves with whom the local police had not been able to successfully cope.

The head of the band was known as Yank Yardell, the Diamond Duke. He gained his soubriquet by reason of his known fondness for diamonds. Jewels of that class were a passion with him, and though he had been suspected of being the ring-leader of the gang which was perpetrating the numerous diamond robberies, no positive evidence could be brought against him to trace the crimes to his doors, until Nick Carter and his assistant, Chick, were called into the case.

Even then the slick scoundrel kept out of the clutches of the law, although Nick succeeded in landing some of his confederates in the Joliet penitentiary for a term of years.

But not one of the captured and convicted rogues would peach on their chief, and he went free.

The effect of Nick's good work, however, was to break up the band, and to render Yank powerless to ply his peculiar business in that city with any continued success.

Therefore, shortly afterward, the Diamond Duke disappeared from Chicago, and Nick had lost all trace of him until he, by chance, while walking up Broadway with Chick that winter afternoon, saw him as he was just in the act of entering the Fifth Avenue Hotel.

The detective reached the corridors of the hotel in time to see his man come out of the bar-room with a cigar which he had just lighted.

Yank crossed directly to the news stand, and asked some question.

Nick hurried forward, and was in time to hear Tyson's clerk say:

"The best we have is two, four and six in the third row of the dress circle."

"Well, they'll do, but I only want two seats," replied the applicant.

"We don't like to split them up, for it's pretty hard to sell a single seat so far back," the clerk said, in an endeavor to sell all three.

"I tell you I only need two. If you want to sell me numbers two and four, I'll take them."

"Well, here they are."

So Yank got his tickets for the two seats, paid for them, put them away in his pocket-book, buttoned up his overcoat, and started out to Broadway, little imagining that the shrewdest detective in America was on his track.

Nick had no difficulty in following his man.

Yank Yardell was six feet tall. His figure was well knit, and he looked like a giant in strength.

Though he must have been nearly sixty years of age, his form was as upright and his step as firm and quick as that of a man of thirty.

His hair was snow-white, but he kept it clipped close to the skull, though it was mid-winter.

There was not the vestige of a beard or mustache on his face.

All in all, Yank Yardell was a man who would be easily remembered by any one who had once seen him.

That was the reason that Nick Carter was surprised somewhat to see the noted criminal walking New York's great thoroughfare

in the light of a winter's day without the aid of a vestige of disguise.

"Well," muttered Nick, "the Diamond Duke is up to something crooked, and I'm going to find it out whatever it may be."

Yardell walked up Broadway to Twenty-eighth street, then he turned eastward.

Nick kept about two hundred feet behind him.

Half-way between Broadway and Fifth avenue stood a coupe with the driver sitting on the box.

The coupe stood in front of an importer's shop, and Nick's natural conclusion was that the "fare," or occupant, was in the store attending to some shopping, while the coupe waited.

But as Yardell reached the place, Nick was taken by surprise to see him suddenly open the door of the vehicle and step in. The driver almost immediately drove off toward Fifth avenue.

Then Nick realized that the coupe had been waiting there for Yardell.

The Diamond Duke's coupe started slowly, and the horse jogged at a moderate trot down Twenty-eighth street. Nick watched it turn north on Fifth avenue.

"I can easily overtake him," muttered the detective, "if I can find a cab at the Gilsey House, and there usually is one or two there at all hours of the day."

He found a cab on the Twenty-ninth street side, hastily explained to the driver what he wanted, and was soon flying eastward in search of the slow going coupe.

He was not long in discovering that he had been tricked.

In spite of the fact that the coupe had

turned north on Fifth avenue, and was going at a moderate pace when last seen, Nick could find no trace of it either on that avenue, or the diverging streets above Twenty-eighth street.

Once convinced that he had lost his man, he paid the cab-driver and dismissed him.

"Yardell played me a very simple trick," muttered Nick. "Before he got to Twenty-ninth street his driver turned about and drove rapidly south, turning off into some side street below Twenty-eighth street. Three to one he went right back to Broadway.

"Now, the question is: did he suspect that he was followed?

"Well, I've got another card, which I'll play on him."

A few minutes later Nick was back in the Fifth Avenue Hotel.

He made his way without hesitation to Tyson's news stand.

"Got a single seat for the Empire to-night?" asked Nick.

The answer was exactly what he expected.

He felt reasonably sure that the clerk would not pass the first opportunity which presented to sell that extra seat.

"Yes," was the eager response, "I've got just one single seat for the Empire to-night."

"Where is it?"

"Third row in the dress circle."

"Which side of the house?"

"Right in front."

"I'll take it."

As Nick paid for and received his ticket, he was pleased to note that the coupon contained the No. 6.

"I'll wager a good big, red apple that the

Diamond Duke will not evade me this time," he soliloquized, as he passed out to Broadway.

"It's going to be a bad night in point of weather," he thought, as he looked at the threatening skies, "and also a bad night in a business sense for Yank Yardell, if he goes to the theater.

"That's it. If he goes, I very much doubt whether he'll be one of the parties to occupy those two seats. If he is, he'll probably be in disguise.

"Well, they'll be two of them, at least, and where they go I guess I can follow.

"Let me see. The play is *Sowing the Wind*. What is the harvest? Why, *Reaping the Whirlwind*.

"The play to-night, Mr. Yardell—something lively for you afterward."

CHAPTER II.

AT THE EMPIRE THEATER.

The night set in wet and dreary. A cold, drizzling rain began at dark and gave promise of keeping up till morning at least. A steady east wind blew the small, half-frozen drops into the faces of pedestrians, and made life on the streets of New York anything but pleasant.

The curtain at the Empire Theater was just going up as Nick Carter presented himself to the head usher with his coupon to seat No. 6, in the third row of the dress circle.

He appeared in the guise of a young man well dressed, dark skin and hair, small black mustache and side whiskers.

No one who was familiar with the fair, smooth face of Nick Carter, however, would

have recognized him in the young fellow whom the usher showed to seat No. 6. A magnificent solitaire diamond-pin graced Nick's necktie, and on the third finger of the right hand he wore a ring which contained another stone equally rare and brilliant.

As the detective was putting these two small fortunes on his person, he said to Chick, who stood by watching him:

"If these diamonds do not win for me the attention of Yank Yardell to-night he will have lost his old-time passion for jewels of their kind."

Nick was somewhat disappointed at not finding seats Nos. 2 and 4 occupied. Still it gave him a chance to settle himself and be ready to watch the couple who should occupy them while they came in and took possession.

The first act was half-finished, and Nick had almost concluded that Yardell, for some reason, was not coming, when the usher appeared, and dropped the two seats on his right into their frames.

At last the expected visitors had arrived.

Nick did not turn his head, but his sense of hearing was strained.

He heard a heavy tread coming down the aisle, mingled with the sound of the rustling and swish of a lady's costume.

When the party reached the aisle in front of the row, he glanced around.

To his surprise, there stood the Diamond Duke, as he saw him in the afternoon at the Fifth Avenue Hotel and on Broadway, only the man was now arrayed in a dress suit.

Yardell turned and stood aside to let his companion enter first.

His companion almost took Nick's breath away for a few moments.

It was a young lady, so beautiful that the detective, as well as every one in that part of the house, for the time being, forgot the play on the stage, and kept their eyes on her lovely face.

She was small in stature, and little in build, yet most symmetrically formed. In complexion, she was a pure blonde, with hair of a golden brown hue, blue eyes, a complexion of milk and roses, full red lips, and a hand like a baby's. By Nick's practiced eye, however, much of the milk and roses were recognized as unnatural.

She was certainly not more than seventeen years old, as Nick told himself after his first glance.

The girl was elegantly dressed in a becoming costume of blue, which set off her blonde charms to perfection.

This youthful beauty sank into the seat next to Nick with natural grace and without so much as giving the young man on her left a passing look.

Yardell occupied the aisle seat, and in a few minutes both he and the young lady were apparently deeply interested in the play.

Occasionally she would turn a look upon Yardell, which Nick could not help thinking was one of anxiety, or full of some troublesome thought.

The play proceeded to the end of the first act. Yardell and the young lady seemed to be very much interested in what was being enacted on the stage.

But the detective heard not a word spoken by the actors, nor saw what they did.

He was studying the strange couple on his right.

What did it mean?

Who was this beautiful girl whom Yardell had brought to the theater so boldly?

She seemed to be very much attached to the elderly man, and the latter showed at times that he was anxious for her comfort and pleasure.

Between the first and second acts, Yardell did not leave his seat. The strange couple talked to each other in low tones, seeming to be oblivious to everything and everybody about them.

Neither looked around at the house, and both appeared to be completely taken up with one another.

Nick could hear very little of the conversation between the girl and her companion, but what he did understand was purely such as might be held by two members of the same family on such an occasion.

Just before the curtain went up on the second act, she took advantage of a lull in their conversation to ask in an anxious tone:

"How do you feel now?"

"Oh, I'm all right!" he replied. "Don't let it trouble you."

"But I can't forgive myself for letting you come out with me on such a night," she murmured.

The curtain cut short further conversation between them.

Thus the best part of an hour passed when Yardell suddenly leaned over and whispered something in her ear.

Whatever it was, Nick saw that the words gave her trouble.

Yardell arose, and made his way slowly up the aisle and out into the lobby.

Her eyes followed him till his form dis-

appeared from sight. Then she turned her eyes toward the stage and sighed.

Nick could see that while her eyes were upon the stage, her mind was not following the play.

Occasionally she would turn her head, and glance anxiously up the aisle.

During one of these times she dropped her handkerchief at his feet.

He stooped, picked it up, and, as she turned her head again to the front, he handed it to her, saying:

"Pardon me, miss, you dropped your handkerchief."

"Oh, thank you!" she murmured, scarcely allowing her blue eyes to rest upon his face an instant as she took the handkerchief from his hand.

He noticed during the brief time her handkerchief was in his hand that it was one of rare pattern.

It was a lady's clear lawn, one inch hemstitch handkerchief of a very costly quality. Embroidered in each corner was a wreath of flowers.

In the center of one of these wreaths was also worked the name "Katherine."

Underneath the name, embroidered in the same colored thread, was a miniature dying dove, pierced with an arrow.

All this Nick, in his customary way of never missing an examination of anything which came in the line of his vision, noted before he returned the handkerchief to her.

The girl's perturbation appeared to increase as the minutes went by without bringing back her elderly escort.

"If she is acting," thought Nick, "she is an adept in her art for one so young."

The young lady's agitation became so great at one time that she half rose from her seat as if determined to leave the house. But suddenly she sank back, and once more gave utterance to a sigh that was almost a moan.

Nick concluded that the time had come, and the circumstances had arisen which warranted him to act in a way he had not contemplated when he bought the seat in the afternoon.

Leaning over toward her, and speaking in a low whisper, so as not to attract more attention than possible from others, he asked:

"Is there anything I can do for you, miss? I see you are distressed about something."

She flashed a shy glance at him, and a tinge of what naturally would be considered a flush of embarrassment came into her cheeks; yet Nick imagined it might be the flush of satisfaction rather than of modesty.

"You are very kind, sir, and you are right to think I am distressed. I don't know what to think of papa's long absence. I am afraid something is wrong."

"Did he not tell you why he went out?"

"Oh, yes. He was not well when we started from home, and just before he left his seat he told me he was going out to the street to get a breath of air, and would return in a few minutes."

"I don't believe anything serious has happened," remarked Nick, "but if you desire I will go out and see what detains him."

"If you will be so good I shall certainly be greatly indebted to you," she murmured.

Thereupon Nick arose and went out to look for Yank Yardell.

Nothing would have pleased him more than to have met the Diamond Duke in the

corridors of the theater with such a fine excuse to get on close and familiar terms of conversation with him.

But the missing man was nowhere to be found.

Inquiry at the coat-room convinced Nick that Yardell had not called there for his coat or umbrella, and yet the man had neither article when he entered the auditorium of the theater.

But the door-keeper remembered the man quite well. He had gone out at the time mentioned without an overcoat—clad only in his dress suit. He stopped just outside the door to light a cigar, and then passed on slowly toward the street.

With this information, Nick returned to his seat, and made a report to the girl.

"So you see you needn't worry. When he has had his smoke he will return," said Nick.

"Maybe I am silly for feeling as I do, but I can't shake off the conviction that something has happened to him," she insisted.

"That feeling is surely without good reasons," he replied.

"Maybe if I tell you that papa is subject to very severe and dangerous attacks in which he suffers terribly, you will better understand why I worry," was her somewhat hesitating reply. "Just before we left home he felt some of the premonitory symptoms, and I didn't want to come out. But they passed away so quickly that he insisted on coming, and I yielded. I am afraid he has been taken suddenly with one of them."

"It is hardly probable," insisted Nick. "I am considered a pretty fair physician in my native city, and I happened to look at your father just before he left his seat. There

was nothing in his face to suggest pain, nor the approach of a severe attack of sickness. Besides, no man, feeling ill, would smoke a cigar."

"Well, perhaps I am foolish to worry. But I wish he would come back. It is not like him to leave me here so long alone."

The red lips quivered just the least bit, and a suspicion of moistness came into her blue eyes.

The conversation ended there for a brief period, but the young woman's nervousness grew perceptibly.

Finally she said to Nick:

"This is becoming unbearable. Something has happened to papa."

"What can I do for you?" gallantly asked the detective.

"I must go out and look for him. If he is not to be found, then I shall hurry home as fast as I can go."

"But it is raining hard. You cannot go alone. Let me act as your escort till you find your father."

"You are very kind, I am sure. I thank you a thousand times, and accept your considerate offer. Let us go at once."

The next minute Nick was accompanying the unknown beauty out of the theater half an hour before the curtain was due to drop on the last act of *Sowing the Wind*.

"Well," muttered he, as he followed her up the aisle. "This is more than I bargained for when I set out this evening to take up the trail of the Diamond Duke. I've struck it deep, if not rich."

"If I am in the hands of a decoy, it is the most beautiful, most innocent appearing and strongest decoy I ever ran up against."

CHAPTER III.

NICK'S MYSTERIOUS RIDE.

Again did Nick inquire in the lobbies and at the door for the tall, athletic-looking old man with the close-cropped white hair.

He was not in any of the corridors. He had not been in the cloak-room. The door-keeper was sure he had not returned.

Then Nick went out upon the street.

He approached the nearest cab to the entrance, and addressing the driver, asked whether he had seen such a man—describing Yardell.

"Oh, yes, I seed him," was the rather eager expression. "He cum out hur in the rain widout nary overcoat or umbrel; acted jest like a crazy man, staggered up to a cab down there, jumped in, and was driv away after giving the driver his instructions."

Nick confirmed this report by inquiring among several other cab-drivers.

Then he went back to the ladies' cloak-room, where he had left his fair charge, and made his report.

She seemed to repress an outburst of tears with much difficulty.

"I was sure something had happened to him. He never treated me so before," she half sobbed.

"Where do you think he has gone?" inquired Nick, determined to play out the game to its full limit, for he now felt sure he was "up against" a new trick of the Diamond Duke's manufacture.

"Home, I suppose; but he must certainly have been wandering in his mind to go off and forget me as well as his heavy coat and umbrella."

"Where are they?"

"In the cloak-room with my cloak. And he has gone away with the check. Oh, dear, what can we do?"

"If you can tell me the number of the check, maybe I could get your wrap as well as his coat."

"Oh, the check was No. 13. Papa mentioned to me that it was unlucky. And it certainly proved itself to be so."

Having the number of the check, Nick, by using the persuasion of a liberal fee, and giving the check-boy a satisfactory explanation, obtained the goods the missing check called for and also his own overcoat.

He then conducted his fair charge to the street, where they were assailed by a storm of: "Cab, sir! Cab! Have a cab!"

Nick did not fail to note the fact that he was led in a way, which to one of an unsuspecting nature would have been imperceptible, without hesitation, toward the carriage whose driver had given him his first information of the departure of Yardell.

The driver was down off his box in a moment; holding open the door of the coupe, into which the young lady stepped without the slightest hesitation.

Nick hesitated long enough to inquire of her:

"Where is he to take us?"

The answer came without a moment's delay.

"No. 222 West One Hundred and Forty-first street."

Nick repeated the number to the driver.

"Gee-whiz!" was the latter's exclamation. "That's way up in Harlem, an' it'll take an hour of fast driving to get there."

"Well, don't lose any time on the way," said Nick, as he stepped into the coupe.

The door was slammed shut, and the next moment the coupe was rattling up Broadway.

Rain was still falling at a steady rate; the night was growing colder and a more disagreeable time for a drive to Harlem could not well be imagined.

The coupe was apparently new and of modern make. Its windows were small and high up.

The vehicle had not gone a block before Nick became aware of the fact that he could not see out. Objects on the street were invisible to a person inside.

One less expert in the tricks of criminals would not have suspected that the coupe was built for the purpose of preventing an occupant from noticing objects which he might pass. Indeed, a novice would have assured himself that the rain and cold so obscured the glass as to render an outlook impossible.

The detective knew better. He recognized the fact that the coupe and its driver were no strangers to the girl sitting at his side.

"And we are not going to Harlem, either," thought he. "If she suspected that I know that 222 West One Hundred and Forty-first street is a vacant lot she would not feel so serene in her pretensions.

"It would puzzle a mind-reader, however, to keep track of that driver's route, shut up in this box. We'll let him go his route. He'll hardly fool Nick-Carter when he pulls up at his destination.

"There are very few places in New York which I can't recognize, if I have a show."

That is what Nick thought, but he was

destined to be compelled to acknowledge his error.

The detective held on his lap the overcoat belonging to Yardell, which he had secured from the theater cloak-room. Having nothing to occupy his mind during the long drive except to carry on a meaningless conversation with the girl at his side, he put in some time by making a "hand-to-hand" search of the pockets of the coat.

The search was more as a matter of form than from a hope that he would find anything in the pockets of value to himself or detrimental to the shrewd owner.

Therefore he was agreeably surprised to discover that his blind search was not fruitless. Several articles fell into the way of his groping hand, and were quietly transferred to his own pocket.

They might be important, or they might be without significance. That remained to be seen later on.

He had no chance to examine them in the darkness of the coupe.

They drove into Central Park, somewhere at the south end—probably at the Eighth avenue entrance. That much Nick realized.

Then followed a drive over the avenues of the Park, long enough to take them to the northern extremities at One Hundred and Tenth street.

But Nick was certain that before the coupe got half-way to the upper end of the Park it had been turned, and was driven back toward Fifty-ninth street.

This conviction was confirmed when on leaving the Park the wheels struck granite blocks instead of a smoother surface.

"Seventh and Lenox avenues above the

Park are both macadamized," mused Nick, "and on one or the other of those drives would we have emerged had the coupe gone to One Hundred and Forty-first street.

"I am certainly mistaken for a stranger, probably because it is natural to suppose a guest at the hotel would have bought that extra ticket.

"Certainly Yardell would not make such a blunder, or set of blunders, in trying to trap Nick Carter.

"Well, I'll soon see where his place of operation is now."

Twenty minutes after leaving the Park the coupe drew up to the pavement, the driver jumped down, opened the door and exclaimed:

"Here we are, sir."

The girl sat next to the open door.

Before Nick could arise, she anticipated him, handed the umbrella to the driver, and jumped out under its protection as soon as he raised it.

Then she stopped until Nick stepped out.

Before he could cast his eyes up or down the street, he found the umbrella rather awkwardly pulled over his head by the little woman holding it, and he was being hurried under an awning, which extended from the outer edge of the pavement to the door of a tall dwelling—one of a long row which were all alike.

"Wait for this gentleman," called the girl to the Jehu, as she led Nick up the steps under the awning.

Nick reached out his hand and rang the bell.

It was answered almost instantly by a meek-looking man servant.

"Is papa here?" eagerly asked the girl.

"Yes, Miss Katherine. He came home half an hour ago, and I fear he is very ill."

"Where is he?"

"In his room lying on the bed."

"Where are the other servants?"

"All retired but me, and Mr. Ward would not let me call anybody."

"I can't understand it," panted the girl.

Then turning to Nick, she said:

"Did I understand that you are a physician?"

Nick bowed assent.

"Then will you kindly wait till I see papa. It might be hard to get a doctor up at this hour, and your professional services may be as welcome as has been your kindness to me."

"I shall be pleased to be at your further service."

"John, conduct the gentleman to the dining-room. I'll not be absent long."

She flew up stairs, while Nick followed "John" back to the dining-room in the rear of the parlor.

There he found a light dimly burning, and a luncheon spread for two on the table.

"This," thought Nick, "is the cheese in the trap at which the mouse is expected to nibble."

CHAPTER IV.

A BOTTLE OF QUEER WINE.

While Nick Carter waited in the dining-room for the return of the beautiful stranger, he had time to think over a few of the decidedly novel features of his situation, for "John" had left the room, closing the door behind him, as soon as Nick was seated.

"Well, after all, I am here in the Diamond Duke's present place of operation without knowing where, in the great city of New York, it is situated," mused he.

"That umbrella trick and the awning dodge was admirably worked, and took me, I confess, by surprise.

"The best I can do is to decide that I am south of Central Park, about midway between two of the avenues in the better part, or the brown-stone front section, of the city.

"I am bound to admit that I am surprised at what I have so far seen.

"How does it come that I find Yank Yardell living in this grand residence in the fashionable quarter of New York city?

"What is that beautiful girl who calls him papa?

"Who is that beautiful girl who calls him house from the curb to the door?

"What is the aim of the trap they have set for me?

"I am certainly played for a stranger and a tenderfoot.

"Everything in the house, so far as I can see in this dim light, is fine and expensive.

"Ah! here comes my temptress. I will now soon see what the plan is to rob me; how they operate."

The fair girl came hurriedly and excitedly into the room:

"He is very ill," she cried, her words coming in trembling tones. "I find him unconscious. Will you go with me to him at once, sir?"

Nick arose and followed her up stairs, believing that the period of his danger, whatever it might be, was near.

He was wide awake, and let no chance go

by unobserved, whereby harm could come to him from some hidden quarter.

The girl conducted him to the second floor rear.

A door leading into a large room stood open.

Through this door the girl preceded him into the apartment.

It was richly furnished, but was like all other parts of the house, dimly lighted by a gas-jet turned low.

Opposite the door stood a large bed, on which Nick recognized the form of the Diamond Duke.

He lay there stretched out on his back in his full dress suit, just as he had thrown himself at some uncertain time before.

His face was pale, almost white, but whether it was caused by a mask or by the reflection of the light Nick was unable to say.

The hands lay at his side listlessly, and his eyes were closed.

Nick went directly to the right side of the bed, and the girl took a position on the other side.

He picked up Yardell's arm, and placed a finger on the pulse. It did not surprise him to find the pulse beating regularly.

Then he raised the lid of one eye, and pressed a finger on the ball.

The man moaned and turned his head.

Nick looked up quickly, and encountered the blue eyes of the lovely girl bent upon his face with a gaze that was almost beseeching.

It was a strange couple, and a strange adventure with which he found himself dealing.

"How is he?" she asked in a low tone.

"Not in a dangerous condition. Can you send a messenger to a drug-store and have a prescription filled for me?"

"Yes. John will go."

Nick hastily took a page from a small memoranda, and wrote thereon a simple prescription, such as a doctor would give as a restorative and tonic—a formula with which he was quite familiar.

"Then send him for this at once," he said, handing her the paper.

She left the room hurriedly with it. As soon as she was down stairs, he turned to the bed, determined to make Yardell confess that he was acting a part.

To his utter surprise, he saw the Diamond Duke open his eyes, raise himself upon his elbow, and place his finger upon his lips as a warning for silence.

"Shut the door," he whispered.

Nick crossed the room and complied.

"Lock it," came the request in a louder tone.

Nick turned the key in the lock, and went back to the bed, feeling perfectly able to cope hand-to-hand with Yardell.

Yet he did not anticipate any such necessity, and he was correct in his surmise.

"Why did you pretend to be insensible?" asked Nick.

"To get a word with you alone."

"For what purpose?"

"You are a doctor?"

"You are a good guesser?"

"I feel one of my spasms of pain coming on; I have felt it for some time. It will soon have me in its clutches. You, as a physician, will recognize the symptoms of the deadly *angina pectoris*. I was anxious that you should not let her know what it is. That is why I feigned unconsciousness till you sent her from the room. My God! the pain! It will kill me!"

By this time the man was writhing upon

the bed in a manner that might have deceived even Nick had not the detective known with whom he was dealing.

At the same time the knob of the door turned. Then came a sweet, low voice calling:

"Let me in. It's Katherine."

Nick looked at the acting sufferer on the bed. The latter managed to whisper in spasmodic words:

"Don't let—her—in. She must not—see—me—thus. Take her down stairs—till—the pain has passed—ten minutes. Tell her—I—want to—be alone. Please go."

Anxious to play into the couple's hands to the full extent of the plot, through which he could not as yet see, Nick obeyed his pretended patient.

He went to the door, unlocked it, passed out, and said to Katherine, who stood looking up at him with child-like pleading:

"Your father will be better alone until the medicine I sent for arrives. Can you take me somewhere while your servant is gone?"

"Why, certainly. Come with me."

She led the way down stairs, and into the dining-room again. The parlor and reception-room were closed and dark.

"Poor papa," she murmured. "This luncheon was for him and me when we should come home from the theater. Now it must go untasted, for I couldn't swallow a mouthful while he is in that condition. What is it, sir?"

"A species of indigestion, I think, miss," replied Nick cautiously. "I shouldn't be surprised if these late luncheons have brought your father to the uncomfortable state in which we found him."

"Then it is hardly worth while to ask you to partake of it?" she said, smiling at him sweetly.

"I never eat late at night," said Nick. Then, in a silent sentence for himself, he

mentally added: "Especially when the luncheon is drugged for my benefit."

A bottle of wine stood opened upon the table, with labels from the bottom to the neck.

Katherine picked this bottle up in both hands, as Nick afterward recalled the fact, and poured out enough of the contents to fill a wine glass.

"You will not refuse a glass of sherry?" she said, with a bewitching look of entreaty straight into his eyes.

For answer, Nick picked up the bottle she had set down, filled another glass from its contents, and, handing it to her, replied:

"Not if my fair hostess will join me."

He expected her to make some excuse and refuse the wine, so firmly was he convinced that it was drugged.

To his surprise, she replied without the slightest hesitation:

"Why, I shall be pleased to do so," and taking the glass in her dainty hand she gave him a mock bow and drained the contents.

Nick watched her closely, and was certain that the wine went down her throat. There was no trick about it.

"It is my glass, and not the wine, which is drugged," he thought; "but I'll foil her."

Pretending an awkwardness he didn't possess, the detective let his glass fall and it was shattered upon the floor.

"How stupid I am!" he murmured.

"Never mind. There is plenty of wine," she cried, cheerfully, grasping the bottle again in both hands. "Unfortunately, there are but the two glasses on the table. If you do not object to using the one from which I have just drank——"

"It will taste all the sweeter," was Nick's gallant reply, as he watched her refill her own glass.

"I was certainly mistaken about the wine or glass being drugged," he thought, "for she

does not show one particle of disappointment in her face. Whatever her game may be it lies not in the wine."

Thereupon he raised the glass and drank the potion she had poured for him.

As he set the glass on the table, John, the servant, appeared in the door-way.

"May I see you a moment, Miss Katherine?" he said.

Miss Katherine hurriedly joined him in the hall, pulling the door shut after her.

Nick reached to the chandelier to turn up the gas.

The key turned, but the jet remained the same. He took a match from his pocket, struck it, and tried to light the other jets in the chandelier.

None would respond to his touch.

A small book-case stood in the shadows of the wall on his left. It had an odd appearance to his critical eye, and he went over to get a closer view.

"Ah! I thought so!" he muttered, as he touched the various volumes, "painted dummies. I am at last getting onto the fraud with which I am surrounded, and I'll know a good deal more about it before I leave."

So he told himself; but even the best laid plans of the most successful detectives sometimes go wrong.

Turning to retrace his steps toward the table, he noticed on the floor at his feet something small and white. Picking it up he found it to be a visiting-card, which, upon a closer examination by the dim light above the table, he saw bore this name and address:

EMORY RIVES,

32 West Forty-second street.

"Hum!" ejaculated Nick. "This may be of service to me. I may want to make the acquaintance of Mr. Emory Rives. Hello! It never pours but it rains."

His eyes at that moment had fallen upon something white lying on the floor near the door, and he walked over to it.

"My lady's handkerchief with the queer wreath and the queerer design embroidered on it. I'll just keep it this time in sweet remembrance. It, too, may be of value to me in the very near future."

He stooped, picked it up, folded it around the card, and thrust both into a secret pocket where he always carried small articles of special value to guard them against chance discovery should he meet with a mishap.

He was suddenly impelled to take this precaution by a fear which seized him at this very moment.

As he raised to an upright position, a strange dizziness seized him. At the same time the dim light in the room began to grow fainter, and the air appeared to be getting almost stifling.

He staggered toward the door, and laid his hand on the knob.

It turned to his touch.

Indeed, it kept turning easily and continuously.

The knob was merely a dummy.

Nick's senses were going fast.

He knew too well now that he had been drugged, after all.

He further realized that he had been locked in. The door before him was as firm in its setting as the side of a man-of-war.

Satisfied of that fact, Nick turned and staggered across the room to the windows in the rear.

There he was confronted with another strange discovery.

Where the windows appeared to be was nothing but a blank piece of wood. What seemed at a distance to be window-sashes were painted delusions.

The detective had barely time to realize this startling truth when the drug overcame him.

A thousand hands seemed to be grasping

his neck, and choking the breath out of his body.

In frightful agony, he laid hold of his collar, and tore it from his throat as if it was a band of fire.

Then he reeled, and fell like a dead man to the floor.

Nick Carter, in spite of his precaution, had nibbled at the cheese and was caught like a rat in a trap.

CHAPTER V.

HOW THE BOTTLE TRICK WAS WORKED.

There came a blank in Nick Carter's life after he fell insensible upon the dining-room floor of the strange house into which he had been led by the decoy of the Diamond Duke.

This blank covered a period of three or four hours.

When his memory came back, he found himself in a hansom cab, rattling up Broadway opposite Grace Church.

The great thoroughfare was almost deserted.

He awoke to consciousness almost as suddenly as if he had been wrapped in a natural sleep.

But there was a dull, throbbing pain in his head; his eyes felt sore, and there was a disagreeable taste in his mouth.

The white walls and spires of Grace Church not only gave him an immediate idea of his location, but brought to his mind with the rapidity of a flash of light the circumstances of his strange adventure of the night.

How had he escaped from the clutches of the Diamond Duke and the girl who had so neatly entrapped him?

Where was he going, and how had he got into that cab?

Raising his hand, he tapped against the top of the cab, attracting the attention of the driver.

"What does this mean, my man?" he shouted.

The driver ran his cab up to the pavement, got down from his seat, and appearing before Nick, said, as he tipped his hat:

"It's all right, sir. I'm takin' you home, as is right an' proper."

"Taking me home? Where?"

Cabby fumbled in his vest-pocket, and finally took out a card, which he handed to Nick.

"I found yer card in yer inside pocket, after a tarnal s'arch fur suthin' to identify yer, an' that is how I knowed where you lived, sir."

Nick read the name and address on the card with considerable surprise.

EMORY RIVES,

32 West Forty-second street.

"You found this in my pocket?" queried Nick. "You must know pretty well how to search a man."

"I do, sir. I have lots of practice with gents as I pick up very airly in the mornin'."

"Where was I when you found me?" interrupted the detective.

"Layin' in a doorway on Broadway, nigh Broome street, sir."

"Oh, I was?"

"You wuz, sir; all knocked out, too, as gentlemen sometimes gits, an'——"

"Was there any one with me or near me when you first saw me lying in the doorway?"

"Not a soul, sir. Broadway at that p'int ain't very lively so late in the night."

"What time is it?"

"About three in the mornin'."

"Well, my man, that is not my card, and not my address. But since you have been so kind as to start to take me home, I will let you finish the contract."

Then Nick gave him his right address, and the cabman once more started up Broadway.

"Well, he kin climb out of a knock-out quicker an' any gent I ever seed afore," muttered the driver, as he gave his lazy horse a cut with the whip, "an' I have in my time took a good many of the high-flyers home airly in the mornin'. This 'ere 'un are a corker, an' no mistake."

Unfortunately for Nick and the cab-driver, neither noticed that a coupe came out of Washington Place shortly after they left the vicinity of Grace Church, and followed them up Broadway at a very discreet distance.

In the coupe was an elderly party with a long beard and black, bushy hair.

The driver of the coupe never lost sight of Nick's cab, until it set him down at his own door half an hour later.

At that time the coupe was several blocks away, and kept on its journey as if the driver was not aware that there was such a thing as a hansom cab in the world.

Twenty minutes later this same coupe was driven through the street on which Nick's residence stood, and just as the detective was tumbling into the bed the occupant of the coupe was peering out and noting the number of the house, having received a preconcerted signal from the driver when exactly opposite the detective's residence.

Then the coupe went east to the avenue, and disappeared.

Next day Nick summoned Chick and Ida to the library. His wife was also present.

To the three he related the adventure of the night before.

"And you don't know where that house is?" asked Chick, when he had heard the last of Nick's recital.

"I have no more idea than the man in the moon."

"Well, it's worth while to try to find it."

"Yes, and I'll try to do it. But it's going to be a hard task."

"The awning to the pavement?"

"There were hundreds of them up last night. The awning clew is not worth much."

"But you have others."

"Yes, I have the handkerchief, the card, and the cabman who took Yardell from the theatre."

"You know him?"

"I can find him."

"Can I help you?"

"Yes. You and Ida may both take a hand."

"How can I fit in?" queried Ida, rather eagerly.

"By tracing the girl through this handkerchief," said Nick, holding up the delicate piece of linen he had picked up from the floor just before he fell insensible in the mysterious house.

"You see it is of rare pattern," he said, as Ida took it from his hand. "You can easily find where it came from by trying to match it at some of the prominent stores. It is not likely that more than one will have that variety on hand."

"After I have found where it came from, you think I can discover who bought it?"

"It is possible. The embroidering of that name and the design was done after the handkerchief was purchased. Such work is usually done by some one employed in the store for that purpose. If I am right in this case, you may be able to strike a lead."

"I'll do my best, sir."

"And you, Chick, will take this card, and hunt up its owner, Emory Rives. Get his explanation, if he can give one, of how the card happened to be in possession of Yank Yardell."

"Nick?"

"Well?"

"You said you had removed some articles from Yardell's coat and transferred them to your own pockets while in the coupe?"

"I did."

"What were they?"

"I don't know."

"They were taken away from you?"

"Yes. In searching me after I fell insensible in that house, they probably found those articles in my possession and relieved me of them, together with my diamonds, my watch, and my small roll of money."

"Then they knew you had searched Yardell's overcoat, while circling around the city in the coupe."

"Certainly; and, Chick, that fact brings forward a revelation."

"A revelation?"

"Yes. Namely: Bad as they are, the couple are not willing to commit murder."

"I guess I'm pretty thick-headed this morning," said Chick, wrinkling up his forehead in a puzzling look.

"You evidently are. Do you not see that when they found those articles of Yardell's in my possession they had evidence that I was no tenderfoot? No lamb, but without doubt a detective? Now, if they would murder any of their victims, my life wouldn't have been worth a picayune."

"Yet they robbed you?"

"Oh, yes! Yank Yardell's passion for diamonds was not proof against the temptation of my brace of sparklers. They robbed me, and then placed me in a quiet section of the city."

"But you don't believe they had a robbery in mind when they went to the theatre?"

"Yes, I do. They had it all planned, exactly as it was carried out, with one exception."

"Oh! there was an exception to their plan?"

"Exactly; in the victim. They were laying for some one else."

"Who?"

"I'd like to find out. It was some one who

didn't fall into the trap. So they accepted me as a substitute."

"There is one mystery which will be hard to clear up, I think."

"What is that?"

"How the girl drugged you."

"There is no mystery in that at all."

"What?"

"I deserved to be drugged for failing to think of the trick at the time."

"What was it?"

"The bottle had two compartments and two distinct qualities of wine.

"One quantity was pure, the other was drugged.

"Any one picking up the bottle, naturally, would pour out from the pure wine.

"This I did when I filled her glass.

"But a finger pressed upon the concave bottom of the bottle shut off the pure supply, and let loose the drugged liquor.

"I remember that in both instances when the girl poured my portion into the glass she raised the bottle with both hands.

"I was away off not to observe that a finger of her left hand was pressed against the bottom of the bottle.

"I remember it now, and I have more than once seen one of those double-barreled bottles.

"It was the neatest and most successful trick to which I ever succumbed."

CHAPTER VI.

"CHICK, WE HAVE TREED OUR COON!"

Nick Carter's acquaintanceship among the cab-drivers of New York is very extensive. Among those who had confirmed the story of Yank Yardell's strange departure from the Empire Theatre, he recognized several at the time.

He knew where to find these men during the day, and he started out to hunt them up.

The first cabby approached proved to be a fertile field.

"Do I know who took the gent away? Why, cert! It was Jed Fluke; No. 218. You'll find him down at Madison Square now."

So Nick proceeded to interview 218.

"He was a rum fare," asserted 218. "Just walked right through the rain to my cab, opened the door, said: 'Take me to the Westmoreland Hotel,' jumped in, and I drove away."

"You took him to the Westmoreland?"

"I did, sir."

"And left him there?"

"That's what."

"Where did you go, then?"

"I drove back to the theatre."

"Did you see a dark-haired young man and a very pretty girl leave before the entertainment was over?"

"Left in the strange coupe? Yes, I seed 'em."

"Why do you call it a strange coupe?"

"It's driver acted strange like. He claimed his was a private vehicle, and paid Lem Goodfriend five dollars to surrender his place near the entrance.

"Then when the young lady comes out with the gent, he asks her, 'Where to?' and she tells him a number away up in Harlem, jest as if he was a public, and she a chance fare. Besides——"

"Well, besides what?"

"He had Ben Mackey's numbers on his lamps. Now, there can't be no two licenses for the same number. And then——"

"What then?"

"Nobody can see through the windys of that coupe. The glass looks all right till you git right up ag'in it, an' then it's just like a stone wall."

With this important information, Nick left

218 and went to the Westmoreland. There he got a very slight trace of his man.

A stranger, whose description tallied with Yardell, rented an umbrella at the check-room, left a deposit for its return, and had gone away.

Nick spent a good deal of the rest of the day on some of the cross streets in the fashionable portion of the city, trying to locate the house of mystery, but abandoned the task as hopeless, and went home to hear the reports of his assistants.

Chick was already there, but Ida had not returned.

"Did you find your man?" he asked of Chick.

"Oh, yes! that was quite easy."

"Well, what did he say about the card?"

"I told him it had been given to a cab-driver by a young society man, who was picked up on lower Broadway in a very bad state of intoxication."

"Did he ask you who the man was?"

"Oh, yes! I said it was a stranger who admitted the card was not his own, and yet couldn't or wouldn't give any account of where it had come from. Then I described you."

"Well, what did he say?"

"I imagined the shadow of a frown passed over his face, but he declared he didn't know the fellow, and couldn't imagine how you got hold of the card. Declared he had none of those cards since he came back from the West three months ago."

"Didn't appear to be sincere, eh?"

"No. And there was another strange thing happened during my visit to Mr. Rives."

"What was it?"

"An envelope and a letter lay on the table near where he sat when he received me.

"The envelope was addressed to him in a most feminine hand.

"It contained a design in one corner."

"Well, what was the design?" asked Nick, as Chick hesitated in his story.

"A wounded dove pierced by an arrow."

"The same that is on the handkerchief?"

"Yes. And that is not all."

"Go on."

"I saw the signature of the letter."

"Ah! Katherine?"

"Katherine."

"This Emory Rives—who is he?"

"A young man about town."

"Any business?"

"I am told not. Has money—at least, he is supposed to have money."

"What is 32 West Forty-second street?"

"Bachelors' apartments."

"Here's Ida," exclaimed Nick, as his young lady assistant entered. "Well, Ida, what success?"

"I visited seven dry-goods stores before I found mates to that handkerchief."

"Then you did find a match?"

"Yes; at Macy's."

"Well?"

"One of the clerks of the linen counter remembered the woman very well who bought a dozen of the handkerchiefs about a month ago, and ordered the name and the design embroidered on them."

"Did she describe the girl?"

"Yes. A well-dressed young woman, very young, quite small, very handsome, very light hair, light blue eyes, very red cheeks, and clad almost entirely in blue."

"Were the handkerchiefs sent to her?"

"No; she called and got them."

"And that was the last they saw of her?"

"No. Her cousin called a week later, and ordered a dozen more just like them."

"Cousin, eh?"

"So the clerk said. This cousin was strikingly like the first young lady; about the same size, pretty much the same features,

but her hair was more of a brown color, the eyes were darker blue, and the color of her cheeks didn't seem to be as rich, was pale and rather sallow. She, too, was dressed from tip to toe in blue."

"'Two Little Girls in Blue,' " quoted Nick. "Did she also call for the handkerchiefs?"

"No; the first customer called and got them when they were finished."

"What? You are sure?"

"The clerk said she was sure of it. She could easily distinguish between the two by reason of the color of the hair, eyes and cheeks. The fairer, fresher one carried away both sets of handkerchiefs."

"So there are two of them, Nick," suggested Chick. "'Two Little Girls in Blue' trying to do you."

"I am not so sure of it, my boy," was the reply.

"You don't think those two customers were one and the same person?"

"I'm not certain those two 'Little Girls in Blue' are both trying to do me. That's what I mean. On the contrary, I am almost convinced that one is trying to do the other."

"Why?"

"Well, it seems probable that those duplicate handkerchiefs were ordered for a purpose, doesn't it?"

"But what purpose?"

"Ask me something easy, lad," smiled Nick. "That is a puzzle which can't be guessed off-hand. We must work it out."

"And yet we are no nearer to finding the hiding-place of Yardell than we were yesterday," growled Chick.

"I'm not so sure of that, my boy."

"What have we to go upon?"

"Well, we can watch this Emory Rives."

"Yes."

"He will probably visit one of the Katherines before long, since she has written to him."

"True."

"Now, you take up a watch on Rives, and follow him wherever he goes. If we can find his 'Little Girl in Blue,' I may be able then to find mine."

"You don't believe his 'Little Girl in Blue' is yours?"

"I didn't say so."

"Well, I'm off to shadow Mr. Rives."

Some time after Chick went away, Nick also left the house well disguised.

While strolling along Fourteenth street he was surprised, almost dumfounded to see Yank Yardell and the girl of his adventure the evening before come out of a store, cross the broad pavement, and enter a coupe, which looked somewhat like that which had taken him on his circuitous drive through the rain.

There was a great crowd on the pavement—the usual winter throng of shoppers—and before Nick could reach the coupe it had driven off toward Broadway.

Luck was with him, however. An empty vehicle of the same order was passing.

Nick hailed it, and bargained with the driver to keep the other coupe in sight until it reached its destination.

This the willing Jehu did not do absolutely. He got blocked at the Fifth avenue crossing, and the pursued vehicle turned up Broadway and was lost to his sight for several minutes.

He was, however, not long in overhauling it, much to Nick's relief; for the detective feared a repetition of the trick of the day before, when Yardell had outwitted and eluded him.

The chase was not a long one.

Another stop was made at Tiffany's.

Then the Yardells once more drove off, with Nick's coupe following at a respectful and safe distance.

The route was up Broadway to Fifth avenue, and thence up the avenue to Forty-ninth

street, where the first carriage turned westward.

Again Nick lost sight of the coupe for some seconds. But it was in plain view when he himself turned into Forty-ninth street. Midway between the avenues the coupe drove up to the pavement on the north side.

Nick's heart beat a little faster when he noted that the row of residences before which the vehicle was stopping might correspond with that into which he was led, almost blindfolded, the night before.

He believed he had run his game to earth at last.

Somewhat to his surprise, when the coupe came to a halt the door opened, and instead of the upright, massive form of Yardell alighting, a tall, thin, white-haired, white-whiskered old man, who had a bad stoop to his shoulders, shuffled out to the pavement.

Then followed a small, bunchy, middle-aged lady, modestly dressed in black, as became a widow of her years. She wore glasses, and her hair, streaked with gray, was worn smooth over her temples, after the style of several years ago.

The stately Yardell and the richly-dressed Katherine who entered the coupe at Tiffany's had vanished during the drive as completely as a pair of harlequins is retransposed into the lean and slippered pantaloons during the transformation scene in the pantomime.

The elderly couple slowly ascended the steps of one of the buildings, and disappeared inside, while the coupe was driven westward to a public stable near Broadway, where it was turned over to the stablemen.

Having located the coupe, Nick ordered his driver to take him to Madison Square.

While giving these orders, a strange, odd-looking young fellow approached the carriage.

Nick recognized him at once.

It was Chick, very much disguised.

Without waiting for a formal invitation, Chick got in with Nick, and the two were soon bowling down town.

"Well?" was Nick's monosyllabic inquiry.

"I tracked my man."

"Where?"

"To Forty-ninth street."

"What part?"

"Next door, west, to the house where you landed your elderly couple."

"You saw them?"

"Yes. Rives had hardly gone in when I saw that coupe coming, so I waited and saw the fare unloaded. Then I saw you, and guessed the rest."

"Chick, we have treed our coon."

CHAPTER VII.

NICK HEARS SOMETHING ABOUT THE OTHER KATHERINE.

At the moment Nick Carter had arranged in his mind a way of working against Yank Yardell and his pretty companion, something occurred which threw him off on altogether another course.

Just as he was about to arise from dinner on the evening after he and Chick had traced their respective parties to adjoining houses on Forty-ninth street, his front door bell rang.

When the servant went to answer the call, Nick arranged the dining-room door so that he and his assistants could see the visitor enter the hall without being seen themselves by whoever it might be.

No sooner had the caller taken off his hat, and thrown back the collar of his overcoat, than Chick gave utterance to a suppressed exclamation of surprise.

"What is it, Chick?" asked Nick, as he watched the servant usher the stranger into the reception-room.

"Do you know who that man is, Nick?"

"Never saw him in my life," was the response.

"Well, he's nobody but Emory Rives, Esquire, of Forty-second street."

"Sure?"

"Sure as rat poison."

"A gentleman wants to see you, sir," announced the servant at this moment. "He is in the reception-room."

"Better step into the library, Chick, and hear what he has to say to me. The communicating door is open, and the curtains drawn," suggested Nick.

So when the detective entered the reception room his assistant was comfortably located in the library, with his ears open to what might pass on the other side of the curtains.

When Nick came into the presence of his visitor, the latter arose, and asked:

"Are you Mr. Carter, the detective?"

"I am."

"Are you disengaged?"

"I can spare you half an hour, or probably a little more."

"No, no! I mean have you time to take up a piece of work in your line of business?"

"When?"

"Right away. The sooner the better."

"What is the nature of it?"

"To find a missing man."

"What is his name?"

"William Ward."

"Missing from where?"

"From his residence on Forty-ninth street."

"How long has he been missing?"

"Nearly a month."

"Are you his son?"

"No, sir."

"Any relation?"

"None, now."

"Oh! Expect to be?"

The young man slightly flushed and bowed.

"You are Emory Rives?"

Nick's cool announcement of his visitor's name startled the latter.

"You know me?"

"I have heard of you."

"How?"

"I had your card last night."

"Was it you who visited me this forenoon?"

"No. That was my assistant. I was the man he told you about."

"What! You, Nick Carter, drunk and sent to my address—you, the great detective!"

"Yes, I, the great detective, if you will have it so. Even great detectives sometimes trip up. The best of us are human. It was more of an adventure, however, than a fit of intoxication."

"I should like to hear about your adventure."

"Well, you shall probably hear the story after I have heard yours."

"Mine?"

"About the disappearance of your prospective father-in-law, Mr. Ward. How did he disappear, and what is there mysterious about it?"

"I'll tell you. The evening before he disappeared he told his daughter that he expected to be away from home on secret business for some time. He didn't know then when he would start, but it was likely that while he was gone he would need money, which he would not like to obtain by giving his check. He therefore requested that should he send a messenger to her during his absence she should draw from her private account, which is very large, whatever sum he should designate in his letter sent to her by the messenger. This sum she was to place in an envelope, in such a manner that no one would suspect what the envelope contained, and give it to the same messenger

when he would return to her with a second note."

"A queer request on his part."

"Yes. But he promised he would tell her all about it when he returned, and would also pay back the money."

"How soon afterward did he disappear?"

"That same night. Next morning Katherine found a note from him on the library table, telling her he had gone on his secret mission and might be absent a month. In it he urged her not to be uneasy, or impatient, and to respond promptly should he send to her for money."

"Well, so far there is nothing mysterious about it."

"Wait. You'll think differently when you hear that in the twenty-six days of his absence she has received six demands from him for money instead of one, and all in larger sums than he had intimated the one demand would be."

"Has she responded to these six requests?"

"She has responded to five. The sixth one came only to-day."

"And how did she answer that?"

"She has not yet answered it. The messenger is to return for the money to-morrow. Now, this last straw has broken the camel's back. It was this sixth demand which aroused suspicion."

"How?"

"She sent him in response to the other five calls eighty thousand dollars, which was the entire amount of what she had in bank, or at her command."

"Yet he now sends for more?"

"Yes, and the last request is for fifty thousand dollars."

"But he knew before he disappeared just how much money she could command in her own name?"

"That is it, sir. So when this last extraordinary demand came she suspected some-

thing was wrong, and sent for me. I advised her to place the affair in your hands, and she sent me to you, while she put the messenger off till to-morrow under the plea, in a letter to her father sent back by him, that she would have to make some outside arrangements to fill the entire amount."

"That was well thought of, but it will not work," said Nick.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean the messenger will not return for the fifty thousand dollars. She has no doubt alarmed the rascals."

"What rascals?"

"The parties who have been robbing Miss Ward as you described."

"Then where is Mr. Ward? What has become of him?"

"I can't answer that—now. We will first find the conspirators, and then we may find Mr. Ward—or discover what has become of him."

"You don't think he has been murdered?"

"Let us hope not. But murder is not impossible, nor yet improbable with the gang to whom he has fallen a victim."

"You talk as if you knew who they are."

"I think I know them. But I want to ask you a few questions before I say more."

"I will answer to the best of my ability anything you ask, Mr. Carter."

"How long have you known the Wards?"

"Since I was a boy in school."

"You are the affianced husband of Miss Katherine?"

"I have that happiness."

"She has a fortune in her own right?"

"Yes; left by her mother."

"Is Mr. Ward in business?"

"No. He retired some years ago."

"Where does he bank?"

"At the Importers' National."

"Ah! Nelson Boyd is the cashier there?"

"Yes."

"Mr. Boyd is a deacon in the Nineteenth Presbyterian Church?"

"He is. I attend that church myself."

"So does Miss Ward and her father?"

"Yes. They are members of the church."

"I thought so. Has Mr. Ward ever been absent on these mysterious trips before?"

"Only once."

"Did he send for money that time?"

"Yes. But Katherine was afraid it was a trap, and didn't send it."

"He showed irritation when he returned?"

"At first, yes. Afterward, he told her she had done right. If such an occasion ever arose again he promised to give her notice in advance."

"And this time he did?"

"As I have told you."

"Mr. Rives, do you know where Katherine's father was during his first strange absence?"

"I—no, sir."

"You suspect, however, he was shut up with some boon companions, gambling."

"That thought has occurred to me, Mr. Carter."

"Well, it is correct. Being a churchman, he didn't dare give his check to replenish his pockets when he was a heavy loser, especially as the cashier of the bank is a fellow member of his church."

"But you don't believe he has been gambling this last time?"

"No. He probably meant such another 'session' when he mentioned the matter to his daughter. But even if he went to the place where the game is carried on, he has not been there all the time. Have you ever known him to gamble?"

"Only once."

"When was that?"

"About a year ago."

"In this city?"

"No. In Colorado Springs. We were all

there. He fell in with some Western gentlemen, and they led him into poker, at which he lost a small sum."

"Who were the Westerners?"

"I only remember one. He was a Chicagoan, named Yardell."

"Ah! Why do you remember him?"

"Because I met him personally several times. He had a very charming daughter, who was so much like Miss Katherine that our united attention was attracted to it, and the resemblance led to very close associations all around for a while."

"For a while?"

"Well, you see, by chance I discovered that Yardell's Chicago reputation was not good. Then we all cut him, and his daughter. We left them at the Springs, and I never saw them again until last night."

"Oh! You saw them last night? Where?"

"At the Empire Theatre. Yardell left about the middle of the play, and didn't come back. His daughter left some little later in company with a young man who was a stranger to me."

"Never saw him before?"

"No."

"Wouldn't recognize the young man if you ever saw him again?"

"Yes, I think I would."

"But you don't."

"I don't? Why——"

"I was that young man."

"Oh! You're joking."

"No, I am not. I took the young woman home."

"You know her?"

"Better than you do."

"Where do they live?"

"Next door to your fiancée."

"What?"

"I said next door to Miss Ward—on the east."

"You are mistaken."

"Oh, no; I am not!"

"Why, old Mr. Courtney and his widowed daughter, Mrs. Clements, occupy that house."

"Your old Mr. Courtney is Yank Yardell, the famous Chicago crook, and the Widow Clements is none other than his beautiful, but wicked, alleged daughter. This explains how it comes that I found your card in their house. That girl got it when you visited them at Colorado Springs."

"You astound me, Mr. Carter!"

"Do I? Well now I'll give you another shock."

"How?"

"By telling you that we shall doubtless find Mr. Ward, or what remains of him, somewhere in that house next door to where he has been living."

CHAPTER VIII.

SHUT UP IN THE WINE CELLAR.

Emory Rives was speechless in his amazement at the words of the great detective. He could do naught but stare at the man who stood before him, and talked like a mind reader, revealing the past and foretelling the future.

Before he could gather himself for a reply, Nick continued:

"Does Mr. Ward own the house he lives in?"

"Yes."

"Who owns that which this supposed Courtney occupies?"

"A man named Bliss."

"Where is he?"

"In Europe. He went abroad last year after the death of his wife, to be gone five or six years."

"How did this Courtney, or rather Yardell, get possession?"

"Bliss left the house all furnished, to be sold or rented by the agent. There is no sale

for real estate, as you may know, and I presume Yardell made a good offer to rent it."

"How long has he lived there?"

"He had possession in the fall when we got back from the West."

"We?"

"I returned with Mr. Ward and Katherine."

"Was the Ward house closed while they were in the West?"

"Yes."

"Ha! ha! Now we are coming at it."

"Coming at what?"

"The scheme of Yank Yardell and his delightful daughter. I'll explain later. What I want to know now is this, Mr. Rives: Did you at any time devote yourself out of the ordinary to Yardell's alleged daughter?"

"Did I—well—you see——" stammered the young man, in some embarrassment.

"Do not hesitate to be frank with me, Mr. Rives. You are speaking to a detective who will not take advantage of the truth you utter, but will place it to your advantage," encouraged Nick.

"Well, then, I met Miss—ah—Yardell in Colorado before Mr. Ward and his daughter got there. Indeed, it was the young lady's resemblance to my fiancée which attracted my attention and led me to seek an introduction. I probably did show her marked attention, but only on account of her decided resemblance to Miss Ward—I assure you I had no——"

"Oh, that is all right, Mr. Rives. You had no thought of winning her affections?"

"None on earth."

"Who was with you at the theatre last night?"

"I went alone."

"Where did you buy your seat?"

"At the Fifth Avenue Hotel."

"When?"

"About ten o'clock yesterday forenoon."

"It was on the side of the auditorium?"

"The right side; yes. You saw me?"

"No. But it must have been so situated that you couldn't fail to see the Yardells."

"It was."

"Of course. They saw to that when they bought their seats."

"I don't exactly——"

"Well, you were intended for the victim to be snared—not I."

"To be snared. Why, how?"

"Same as I was. They expected you to come across between acts, take Yardell's seat, and fall into the trap of accompanying the dear agitated girl home. But you didn't bite, and were saved."

"Saved?"

"That's it. If you had taken my ride, you would not, in most likelihood, have seen this morning's sun. Mr. Rives, I believe the Yardells are playing a desperate game, the object of which is revenge on you and the Wards—that is the girl's share of the spoils—and the robbery of your future wife and her father the more substantial business arrangement of the Diamond Duke himself."

"They failed so far in trapping you. We must now find out how far they have succeeded in the assault upon Mr. Ward."

"What is to be done?"

"I want to get into Mr. Ward's house."

"That is easily done. But why?"

"I'll explain when I get there. Are you willing to place yourself in my hands, Mr. Rives, and do what I direct?"

"I am, perfectly."

"Then I'll put you to the test. Chick!"

The assistant parted the curtains, and stepped into the room.

Rives looked at him in surprise.

"My assistant, Mr. Rives," said Nick, by way of introduction. "I think you have met before."

"Not to my knowledge."

"He called on you this morning about that card."

"Is he the same?"

"Only a little changed, since then, in make-up. He has heard all that passed between us, and no time need, therefore, be lost in telling your story over again. You will both please follow me."

Nick led the way upstairs to his "den."

"I am going to ask you to trade the suit you now wear, Mr. Rives, for one I'll give you from my stock in hand," said Nick, waving his arm around at the multitude of costumes, the sight of which was filling Rives with surprise.

The young man looked questioningly at Nick without replying.

"Sit down a few minutes, Mr. Rives," continued Nick, "till I produce another man like you."

So saying, he began work on himself, stopping occasionally to look at Rives.

He carefully selected a wig, mustache, and false eyebrows, and fitted them on. Then he used his paints and dyes with a quick touch, which was at the same time entirely artistic.

When he wheeled around, Rives gave a gasp of amazement.

He saw his own head and face, as Nick had promised, on the shoulders of another man.

"We are about the same size. With your clothes on me, no one, at even a short distance, will know that I am not Emory Rives."

"I think I understand," replied Rives. "You are to represent me?"

"Yes. I am going directly from the house to the Ward residence. If I should be watched, as I have reason to believe will probably be the case, no one will suspect it is not you."

"And what is to become of me meanwhile?"

"Can you drive a horse?"

"Can I drive a horse? Why, I am considered an expert."

"Then please take off that suit of clothes."

First, Nick put on the suit Rives took off, and then dressed the latter in a suit of livery, and otherwise transformed the young clubman into a cab-driver.

While Nick was putting on the suit Rives had laid off, Chick was busy transforming the young clubman into a cab-driver.

Nick then wrote a letter to a livery stable-keeper in the neighborhood, and gave it to Rives.

"Take that to the place of address. They will furnish you with a coupe, which you will drive up to my house, and wait till your fare comes out. I'll give you your directions afterward. Now, I'll have Chick show you out by a secret way."

Turning to Chick, the detective said:

"I am pretty well convinced that Mr. Rives was followed when he came directly here from the Ward residence. If so, we shall probably be watched when he drives me away.

"I want you, therefore, to be outside with your eyes open, and if you find that Yardell is not at the Forty-ninth street house, try to keep him away for the next few hours."

"All right, Nick, I understand."

"And, Chick!"

"Yes, sir."

"Should the chance offer to arrest Yardell, don't fail to nip him."

"You feel sure the time has come?"

"As sure as I am that I will find out what has become of Ward as soon as I get a chance to search Yardell's house," was the reply.

Twenty minutes later, the society man, disguised as a cabman, drove up in front of Nick Carter's house, and waited patiently for ten minutes.

Then the detective, in his counterfeit presentment as Rives, came out of his house, got into the cab, and said to the driver:

"Take me to No. — West Forty-ninth street."

"That is Ward's residence," muttered the false cabman, "and I'll bet a bottle of wine against a cigar that Nick Carter's expectation of being followed will be fulfilled."

Though he didn't see the spy, that individual never once lost sight of the carriage till it drew up in front of the Ward residence, and Nick went inside, leaving the disguised clubman on the box of the coupe outside with the mere order:

"Wait."

"Well, if this isn't a stiff go, I'll eat the horse," thought Rives, "and if it was anybody but Nick Carter back of this adventure, I would not feel comfortable over it."

Miss Ward met Nick almost as soon as he entered the house, and Nick was not slow in noticing the marvelous resemblance between her and the woman next door.

He had some difficulty in making her understand the queer state of affairs—that her lover was sitting out on the top of the coupe, and that the man before her was Nick Carter in disguise.

But he told her enough about the people next door to give her some idea of the object of his visit, and then got her consent to have free use of the house for several hours, if necessary.

This privilege being granted to Nick, he proceeded to make a careful search of the Ward residence, which finally ended successfully in the air chamber—a large, dark, unoccupied space between the roof and the ceiling of the fifth floor front.

Entrance to this place was obtained through a garret in the rear.

It was in this unused section that Nick's search was crowned with success. There he discovered a communication between the two houses which had been cut out, no doubt, while the Ward residence was still locked up.

Using this secret passage, Nick was soon in a similar apartment to the air chamber of

the Ward house. He had noted the fact that both buildings were exactly alike in external appearance, and had come to the conclusion that one was a duplicate of the other—a conclusion which was found to be correct in every respect.

It was not long until he was making his way cautiously through the home of the Yardells.

"If they have Ward here, he should be somewhere beneath the level of the street, whether dead or alive," mused Nick. "I am going to search the cellar."

He had less difficulty than he anticipated in making his way through the house. It seemed to be almost, if not quite, deserted.

Scarce fifteen minutes passed from the time he made his entrance through the air chamber and garret until he was cautiously descending the cellar stairs.

The place was as dark as an apartment in Mammoth Cave, after Nick closed the cellar door behind him.

Then he felt his way to the bottom of the rough stairs and was about to produce a small bull's-eye lantern, which he had brought for convenience sake, when a faint streak of light caught his eye.

It came from a point on his right, thirty or forty feet ahead.

Without stopping to investigate, Nick began to slowly pick his way through piles of empty barrels, boxes, and rubbish toward the line of light, which gradually grew brighter as he approached it.

The nature of the light quickly disclosed itself. It came from the entrance into a sub-cellar, or what Nick at once recognized to be a wine cellar.

The door was slightly ajar, showing that a light burned beyond it.

Nick cautiously, but quickly, approached the door, pushed it open, far enough to see in, and stopped to investigate.

The apartment was closed in with solid walls of stone, and was about twelve feet square. The door was of iron, and the floor of marble slabs. With the door securely closed, a small ventilator opening into the wall high up near the ceiling supplied air from the outer world in limited quantities sufficient to maintain life.

As Nick peered through the open doorway a singular sight met his eyes.

A gray-haired, elderly man was sitting on the earthen floor in one corner of the cellar, eating something from a platter which he held on his lap.

Squatting in front of the old man, with his back toward Nick, was another person—a burly, stout-built man.

Nick's conclusion, instantly formed, was that the old man was William Ward, and the other was his jailer, who had brought the millionaire's dinner to him and was waiting till it was eaten.

A second glance brought to Nick's gaze a revelation. He saw a heavy chain, one end of which was fastened to an iron band around Mr. Ward's right ankle, and the other end to a staple imbedded in the wall.

Mr. Ward was not only a prisoner, but so securely held that escape without aid was made utterly impossible to him.

Nick opened the door wide, and began to move quietly across the cellar toward the unsuspecting jailer, when Ward looked up, saw him, and uttered a cry of astonishment.

In an instant the jailer had taken alarm.

He leaped to his feet, and faced about just as Nick sprang upon him.

There was a short, fierce struggle, in which Nick had the best of it in point of strength, skill and preparation.

At the moment Nick succeeded in snapping a pair of handcuffs upon his prisoner, a noise from behind attracted his attention.

He turned his head to see a face at the

fast-closing door—the beautiful face of the woman he met the night before in the Empire Theatre.

It was merely a glance, but it was enough to let the detective see the gleam of satisfaction on that face.

Then the iron door clanged shut, and the noise of shooting bolts on the outside was heard.

Nick made a rush across the room, and threw himself against the door.

He might have as well butted against the stone walls.

Even while he stood looking around trying to realize the gravity of the situation, a thin cloud of smoke began to creep through the crack under the door, and the odor of burning wood became plainly perceptible to the sense of smell of the three men in the sub-cellar.

"My God!" cried the helpless jailer, "she has fired the lumber up there, and we are all as good as dead men."

CHAPTER IX.

REAPING THE WHIRLWIND.

The situation was indeed precarious, as Nick realized.

In a few minutes the inflammable piles of lumber in the main cellar would be a mass of flames, making an oven out of the wine cellar.

Death was thus sure to come, either by strangulation or roasting.

"Who are you?" asked Mr. Ward, when Nick turned to him and began to examine the chain which held the old man a prisoner.

"I am Nick Carter, the detective. And I've come to rescue you."

"Too late!" groaned the old gentleman,

"we shall all be roasted alive in this hole. Oh, my poor child! Oh, Katherine, how could you treat me so!"

"Do you know where you are?" asked Nick.

"Yes! Yes! To my sorrow I do."

"Where?"

"A prisoner in the wine cellar of my own house."

"Your own house?"

"Certainly."

"Who told you that?"

"No one need tell me. Don't I recognize this place. I've been in it hundreds of times."

"Oh, the she devil! We shall be burned alive!" shrieked the man whom Nick had captured.

"There may be hope for you, Mr. Carter," exclaimed Ward. "You may escape at least."

"How?"

"The air-shaft of the furnace runs just beneath this floor."

"Well?"

"It is made of tin, and large enough to let a man crawl through."

"But how can we get into it?"

"If you could raise a couple of the stone flags from the floor you'd easily find the air-shaft. Then you might cut through."

"Yes, if we had a weapon of any kind to pry up the flags, or cut through the tin," said Nick, looking around.

"If I help you out in that respect, will you promise no harm shall come to me after our escape?" asked the jailer.

Nick looked at the fellow, and was not slow to realize that the man was speaking with some hidden knowledge to spur him on.

"Yes. Show-us how we may escape, and I'll stand by you afterward, provided you'll make a clean breast of it against Yank Yardell and that woman," said Nick.

"Won't I, though," growled the jailer. "That she devil would have roasted me here with the rest. It was a fear of her treachery that induced me to hide a crow-bar and ax in this place. I meant to use them to force the door, should she ever manage to lock me in."

"Where are these implements?"

"Take these off, and I'll get them."

He held up the handcuffs, and Nick struck them off in an instant.

The jailer walked across the small apartment to the side next the street, reached up to an offset in the wall, which was concealed in the semi-darkness, and produced the two tools.

With the use of the crow-bar, and guided by Mr. Ward, Nick soon had two of the marble flags raised, exposing to view the great tin air-tube.

It was then the work of only a few minutes to cut out a huge section of the pipe with some vigorous strokes of the ax, and the means of escape was before them.

"Now, then, we'll soon have you out of this, Mr. Ward," exclaimed Nick, as he threw the ax away, and turned to the imprisoned man.

"Impossible!" groaned Ward. "My chain can hardly be forced with the tools you have."

"No; but that lock can be opened," said Nick, as he produced his pick-lock key and stooped to examine the band around the prisoner's leg.

There was a sharp click a moment later, and the iron band fell from Ward's ankle.

"Now, then, we have no time to lose,"

urged Nick. "The smoke is getting uncomfortably thick in here, and that iron door is already so hot it would blister the hand that touched it. You first, Mr. Ward."

The liberated man did not hesitate to take advantage of the detective's invitation, but promptly crawled into the air-tube through the ragged opening.

"Now, then, my man," cried Nick to the jailer, as Ward's feet disappeared.

The jailer climbed into the tube. Nick went last. They all soon reached the back yard, and twenty minutes after the iron door was bolted against them the three men reached the street, only to see it blocked with an immense crowd, attracted to the scene by the fire, which had been discovered in the basement and the cellar. It was not until they reached the street that Mr. Ward realized he had emerged, not from beneath his own house, but from beneath the house next door.

Among the first persons Nick met was Chick.

"Well?"

"I've got him. He's locked up at headquarters."

"And the woman?"

"I'm afraid she's gone. She's not to be found."

And Chick was right. During the excitement resulting in the discovery of the fire, Yardell's female accomplice managed to make her escape for the time being, and disappeared as completely as though she had been a victim of her own crime.

But Nick promised himself that some time in the future he would treat himself to the pleasure of putting that beautiful fiend be-

hind the bars of a State prison, where she could do no more harm to victims of her deadly charms.

Chick in a few words explained how he had made his capture.

As Nick anticipated, a spy watched him when he drove away from his own house disguised as Emory Rives.

The spy followed the cab to Forty-ninth street, and then went to a saloon on Sixth avenue.

Chick kept him in sight all the time.

At the saloon the spy met Yardell in his disguise as the elderly neighbor of the Wards.

To him the spy was making a report, when Chick, having secured the aid of two policemen, made a descent on the saloon and captured both Yardell and his ally. The latter was discovered to be the coachman, who had driven Nick around town the night before.

On Yardell's person was found nearly the entire eighty thousand dollars which he had so successfully got from Miss Ward.

With the help of the testimony of Boyd, the man who Nick captured in the wine cellar, Yank Yardell was convicted, and sent to the penitentiary for twenty years. His coachman was also captured, and got a ten years' term in Sing Sing.

Boyd, who turned State's evidence, was one of the two tools whom Yardell and his alleged daughter had employed to aid them in their plot against the Wards. Those four were all who occupied the mysterious house.

Revelations by Ward and the man Boyd confirmed Nick's idea of Yardell's plot. It was found to be correct in nearly every instance.

It was Yardell who first tempted Mr. Ward to gamble, while they were in Colorado Springs.

In New York, Yardell once more dragged the old man into his one weakness, which he was trying to keep concealed from his daughter and friends.

Yardell's plot was the boldest move of his life.

Profiting from the information which he had gained from Ward in Colorado concerning the latter's New York residence and connections, Yardell came secretly East ahead of the Wards.

Luckily for him, he found the house next door to the Ward residence for rent.

He secured it, and began to lay his plot to rob the rich man.

Before the Wards got back to the city, Yardell and his assistants had cut their secret passage-way through the partition between the air chambers of the two houses.

By this means the Diamond Duke and his female ally frequently prowled through Ward's residence at night.

On one of these nocturnal visits, the girl found one of Katherine's handkerchiefs and carried it away.

Then a mania seized her to have some exactly like them.

Her search through the dry-goods establishments was made at once.

She found the particular kind at Macy's, and left her order, even giving "Katherine" as the name, and the same design to be embroidered on each one.

When Yardell heard what she had done, he became alarmed, and forced her to make up

to represent Katherine Ward when she went back to get the handkerchiefs.

Yardell happened to be sneaking through Ward's residence on the night the latter told Katherine he expected to be called away for a day or so on private business. He heard the old man instruct the daughter to honor any demand for money which might come from him by messenger during his absence, and listened attentively while Ward went into details how she should raise the cash.

Of course, Yardell knew what it meant, for he had an engagement with Ward for a game at cards on the following day.

That night Mr. Ward was chloroformed, and removed in an insensible condition by Yardell and his confederates to the wine cellar under the latter's house.

There he saw no one but his jailer, whom Nick surprised, and who, acting under instructions, made the old man believe that his daughter, Katherine, was the cause of his incarceration.

Nick's theory is that Yardell designed to induce Ward to turn over to Katherine all his available account and negotiable stocks, and that these would then be transferred in cash by the personation of his female confederate as Miss Ward.

But when Ward was rescued the time had not yet arrived to ask of him this price for his freedom.

They, however, had in their possession one of his letters, written a year before to Katherine, and with this Yardell turned one of his wicked accomplishment to advantage, and so correctly forged Mr. Ward's handwriting that he succeeded, after five efforts, in getting every dollar of her ready money, amounting

in all to eighty thousand dollars. Had his greed known a proper curb, he would not have aroused the suspicions of the credulous girl, and Nick's task in landing him in Sing Sing might have been more difficult.

Bad as Yardell was, no murder could be traced to his doors. But Nick believes that the girl, who was Yardell's last accomplice, did not hold human life so high.

Emory Rives and Katherine Ward are now man and wife, and the only cloud on the horizon of their united lives is a fear that she whom they knew as Miss Yardell will some day and somewhere cross their path when they least expect her.

And Nick Carter feels sure that sooner or later he will have the opportunity presented to even up an unsettled account with Katherine Ward Rives' double.

Among the detective's curios is the queer bottle with the two compartments—out of which he and that woman drank wine together on one of the few occasions in his life when he was outwitted by a woman.

The detective also got possession of Yardell's curiously constructed coupe. He found it a marvel of ingenuity, which had been built to order in Europe for the Diamond Duke.

Among its contrivances was a series of slides on the lamps, worked with a spring, whereby the number of the vehicle might be changed, as if by magic, a dozen times in a night.

The interior of the coupe was equipped with a receptacle under the seat filled with articles of disguise. There was also a mirror and a bright lamp for the latter's use at night, whose rays were as completely shut in by the

opaque glass of the dummy windows as if they shone in a dungeon.

In this cab, while on their way downtown or homeward bound, Yardell and his accomplice changed their disguises with ease and regularity.

"They were about as slick a couple as I ever met in my whole experience," said Nick to his assistant at breakfast the morning after Yardell's capture.

And thus for the time he dismissed the case of the "Two Little Girls in Blue."

THE END.

The next number of the NICK CARTER WEEKLY will contain "The Government Custom's Swindle; or, Nick Carter's Work for the U. S. Treasury," by the author of "Nick Carter."

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